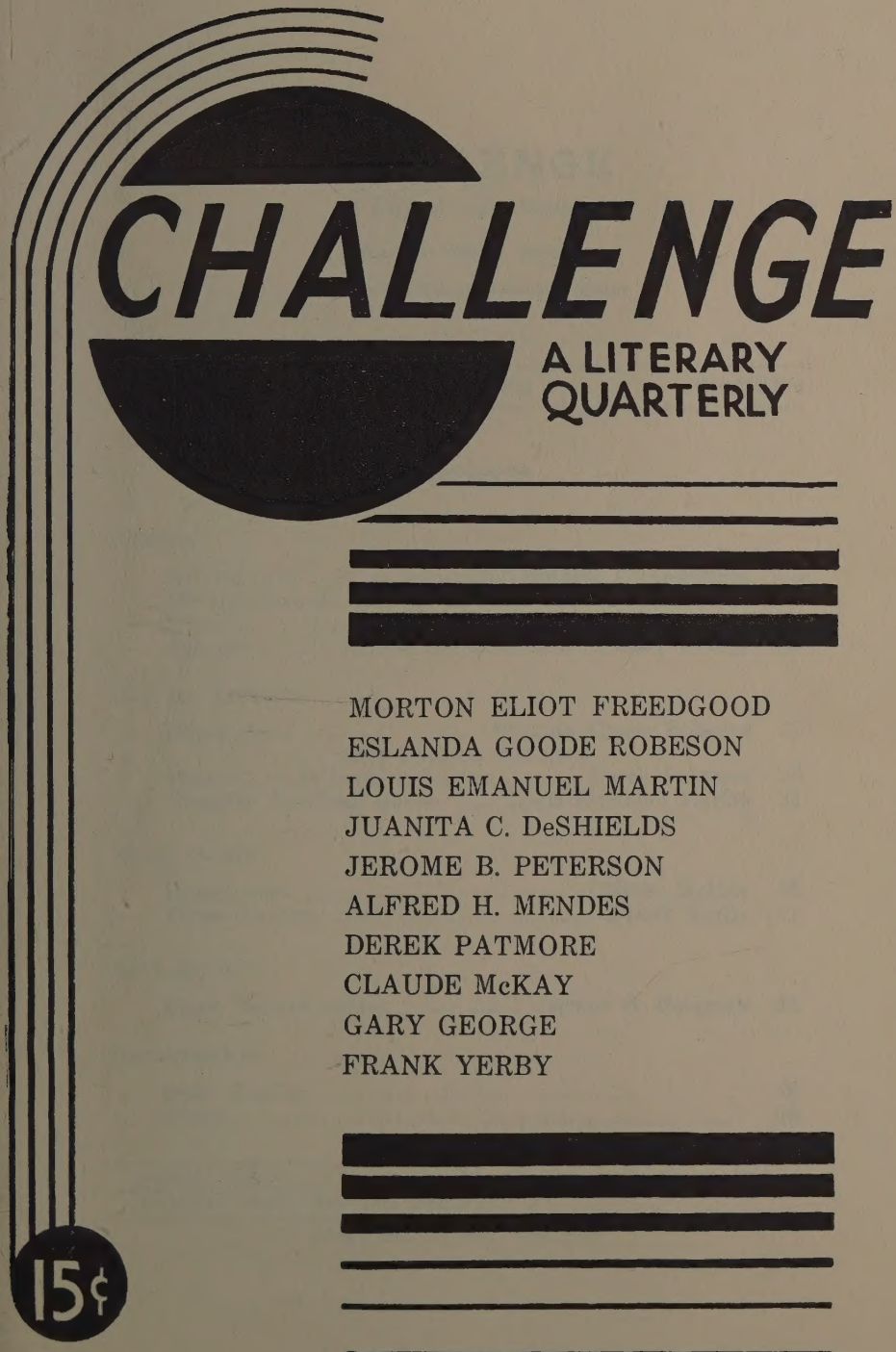
CHALLENGE
A LITERARY QUARTERLY
MORTON ELIOT FREEDGOOD
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LOUIS EMANUEL MARTIN
JUANITA C. DeSHIELDS
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FRANK YERBY
15¢
WINTER NUMBER

CHALLENGE

A Literary Quarterly

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All For Art

JUANITA C. DESHIELD

The New York bus sped along the dark winding road. The houses that lined its way were quiet, the moon full and radiant in the sky was quiet — all was quiet along the road, save the whirring bus and its shrill siren. The occupants in the moonlit interior were quiet too. Some were snoring quietly, some were smoking quietly. In the rear a passenger was reading by the light of the moon. The book was a big one — not a pocket edition, but a heavy leather-bound volume.

Suddenly and abruptly the stillness was broken by a lusty 'Bravo!' Everybody started from their seats and turned to the rear whence came the disturbance. "Bravo, my good Shakespeare! Well said, Morocco, my good Prince!" It was the little moonlight reader shouting lustily and slapping the pages vigorously with her palm.

She was a plain-looking little coloured girl. Coming from Canada, that rugged land where Apex and Anti-kink are indispensable necessities, but dutiable luxuries, her coarse black hair was "bad". Her broad flat nose and thick red lips were an unusual compliment to her milky-white complexion. Her hands and eyes seemed not to belong to her at all. As beautifully long and slender as any patrician's, were her hands. Her eyes, large and expressive, registered her every thought, and when she was excited, rolled like Eddie Cantor's.

They were wide open now, dancing with pleasure and wonder. Then she suddenly became conscious of the commotion she was making. She looked at her fellow passengers apologetically, gulped audibly, fluttered her hands nervously and continued her reading.

When day began to break and the bus rolled out of Albany and over the Hudson, she took in all the hustle and bustle of the river with avid eyes, muttering to herself like a little crone. All along the beautiful Riverside Drive, she was comparatively quiet, emitting an occasional "ah", when stirred by some unusually beautiful view of the River. As the bus nosed its way into Grand Central Terminal and people began getting off, she looked around her in dismay.

"Oh driver," she called — and

she pronounced it "driveh" like an Englishman — "Oh Chauffeur, my kind Sir, is this Pennsylvania Terminal?"

The driver regarded her quizzically. "Naw. Next stop, lady."

A few more minutes and the bus came to the end of its journey, at the Pennsylvania Station.

"Have we arrived?" she inquired, eyes agog.

"Pennsylvania Station", yelled the driver.

"Would that be, perchance, the same as Pennsylvania *Terminal?*" she asked a husky, brown red-cap who was handling the baggage with real efficiency.

"This bus don't go no further," he replied epigrammatically.

"Oh I see," she smiled. "Yes, yes, that's my grip there. Softly, my good youth, softly, it's not a very hardy grip." For the "good youth" was tossing bag onto bag pell-mell. She stood on the platform by her shabby battered hat bag tagged "Candice de Mille" (it was her real name) gazing up and down and around. A cabby came up to her.

"I presume you to be the driver or the proprietor of a taxicab. I wonder if you could find me this address?" and she gave him an address in the East uptown district—just on the fringe of Harlem.....

"O but my good Aunt, you don't understand—you don't begin to comprehend the seriousness, the gravity of the purpose of my being here in New York." Candice, standing in the middle of the Aunt's dingy front room was gesticulating dramatically. "New York," she continued, "cultural environment, educational opportunities, art in all its manifold expressions—to partake of these advantages, that is why I am here," she concluded with a flourish.

Her Aunt, a handsome, stout West Indian woman with marcelled hair and work-hardened hands regarded her sister's only child pityingly and shook her head. There had been quite a scene in this East Side apartment. Candice had taken her only five dollars to enroll for elocution lessons, instead of getting her hair done and buying some shoes as her Aunt had suggested.

Long residence in the United States had done much to erase the woman's national idiosyncrasies, but the lazy sing-song intonation and idioms of the Islands remained.

"How you hope to pay for this high and mighty schoolin'—ne?" and her voice rose high and short. "I don't see it could make you a living no how!"

"These hands," replied Candice, holding them up, "these hands shall be the stepping stones for my brains. I shall work."

Her Aunt sucked in her breath

through her teeth to express her utmost contempt. "Shux child! Your hands too lady-like—ne."

A knocking at the door interrupted any further discussion. Candice turned towards the door and in a loud sonorous voice like Hamlet's Sentinels, cried: "Who knocks?"

"'Tis just me," replied a hearty voice in good strong Irish brogue. That was the fireman's wife from next door. She was a friendly neighbor, and she didn't mind "cullerrd payple a-tal."

"Hallooo," Candice greeted her cordially. "How are the wee bairns?"

Now Candice knew nothing at all of Irish phrases, but Scotland was near enough Ireland so "bairns" ought to make Mrs. Conelly feel quite at home,—lend atmosphere as it were. She was genuinely fond of the whole Conelly family; Mrs. Conelly, who was always minding other people's business. The children whose noses were always running, and Mr. Conelly who told stories, taller than the Empire State Building. "Good primitive folk of Erin," she would say to herself.

"Oh the childred be fine," replied Mrs. Conelly. "And how are you likin' New York, Miss?"

"Well really, Mrs. Conelly, in so short a space of time it is difficult for one to gather a comprehensive picture of so vast and varied a panorama as New York presents. Its aspects are so manifold."

Mrs. Conelly turned to Auntie in awe, "By God, she talks like a perfesser."

Auntie merely grunted. "I trying to find her a job, you know. For she have no clothes and she spend all she money for schoolin! She can't eat schoolin', you know, Mrs. Conelly, and she can't wear it. And that's what I trying to tell she."

"Yes girlie," affirmed Mrs. Conelly, "you have to look to yerself too. Now I was hearin' of a job up in the Bronx. O' course they're all Jews up there, and I hates the shadows o'them, but then they're always willing to take an inexperienced girl 'cause they can get'em cheap. I'll git someone to speak for ye."

"Shux, you tellin me, Mrs. Conelly, I tell you those Jews is fresh like soap — they damn fresh and they too work you hard. So see if it is something light, because she can't cook, you see?"

"O but Auntie," interposed Candice who had been an interested listener to the foregoing, "you underrate my culinary ability. I can concoct a delightful French omelette, and grill excellent pancakes, provided of course

you have ready-to-mix flour, and I can fry bacon fit for his Majesty, George Fifth."

"Child you can't cook no bacon for no Jew," her Aunt exclaimed.

Two days later Candice found herself giving Mrs. Himelstein her qualifications as a housemaid. "Of course you realize, Madam, that this is not my vocation, it is merely an avocation. You see 'we shall not always plant while others reap the golden increment of bursting fruit.'" And all the time her beautiful hands spoke with her, gliding in gestures as smoothly as her words flowed, now and then swooping down to stress a point.

Now Mrs. Himelstein was a young conscientious Jewish matron, newly married, unversed in the art of hiring and discharging servants. She certainly didn't know what to do with this gesticulating young creature. It was customary to ask a prospective girl if she could make porridge and roast meat. But Candice had the floor. "Have you any children, Mrs. Himelstein? I do so love them, you know—little bits of humanity or as Wordsworth said, 'trailing clouds of glory.'" Mrs. Himelstein made as if to say "no." "No? How unfortunate. No physical inability, I trust. Well then I hope God will soon bless you with some. I think I ought to tell you that housekeeping bores me to exasperation, but under the circumstances, I'll be as pleasant as possible about it." She laughed amicably. "Now as to cooking," she continued, "I can make delightful omelette——" Mrs. Himelstein was still hoping to get in a word when Candice left her, promising gaily to be back next morning bright and early.

The next day found Candice at Mrs. Himelstein's betimes. She showed a pleasing willingness to do anything that was asked of her and she had an unusual capacity for learning, but she had so much to learn. She chattered incessantly as she flitted around, washing dishes and breaking them, and apologizing profusely. "Tsst, tsst, tsst! c'est dommage!" she exclaimed as she broke the third cup. "But you don't understand French, do you?" she amended. "You see," she explained, "in Canada we speak a great deal of French. We're bilingual, and all the billboards are in the two languages. I especially love the one," she continued, "that says 'keep that schoolgirl complexion' and underneath says 'Gardez ce teint de colier'—I think that's so euphonious, don't you?" But Mrs. Himelstein didn't think so at all; she was thinking of her cup lying in smithereens by the sink.

"O now don't you concern

yourself about picking that up, Mrs. Himelstein, I'll sweep it up myself directly."

The good woman left the kitchen immediately—she felt she couldn't stand a nervous breakdown then.

Within a week, the Himelstein establishment began to move along according to routine. After Candice had become accustomed to the shape and weight of the china, she didn't break so many pieces. Breakfast at eight, lunch at one, supper at six. Thursdays off. Candice went to elocution lessons Thursdays.

Every other evening she bathed and did exercises. After she had splashed around a bit she would begin. In a small thin voice she would start counting from one and go up to twelve in a mighty crescendo. Sometimes by way of variation she would give two low counts and then the third shrill and high as a bird, thus—one two threeeeee. Then she would do her laughing. Way up high like an old witch, then down—a child, a girl, a woman, a man, a devil, a base villain, and up again. Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! When she was tired of that there were tongue twisters—ba bi, be, bo, bou, bow. Every now and then she beat upon her bosom for emphasis, and the impact of wet flesh upon wet flesh made a terrific clap.

Of course the Himelsteins were pleased that their maid was so particular about her personal cleanliness, but any invitations that took them out of their home of an evening was very, very welcome.

Pay day Candice decided to stock up with toiletries. That was a line of goods against which she had absolutely no sales resistance. First, there was a hair grower guaranteed to resurrect dead roots. Then there was a grey dirty looking salve to give the skin radiance. There were a hand lotion, and great big mittens to protect the hands. There were corn plasters etceteras.

The next evening she didn't go through her bath rites. Mr. and Mrs. Himelstein were very grateful, for guests had unexpectedly dropped in. Perhaps Candice would serve tea for them. Mr. Himelstein went to inquire. He knocked on her door. No answer. He turned the knob. It was unlocked. He looked in. It was dark. There was no one in the room — but no. Mr. Himelstein felt himself perspiring uncomfortably. Nothing was visible. But there was a sharp hissing staccato sound, and over in the corner there were sparks flying, blue sparks like electric sparks.

"Who's that?" spoke a startled voice from within the room.

Mr. Himelstein jumped. His throat was mighty dry but he managed to gulp, "Is that you, Candice?"

"Yes, is that Mr. Himelstein?" laughed Candice. The sparks died out, the hissing ceased and the lights came on. Then he saw the cause for the apparent mystery.

Her bushy black hair was standing right up on end, every hair for itself. She had been combing and brushing it vigorously, and the friction had generated electricity. But what had she done to her face! She had smeared the grey opaque salve all over her face from hair line to chin. It covered her like a death mask and made her look hideously comic. It covered everything—her lips, her nose, her brows—only her eyes were natural. She was naked, save for a pair of panties and big clumsy black cotton mittens. There she stood, her hair erect like a Fiji Islander's, her big dark eyes gleaming from a greyish luminous face, her black-mittened hands flapping like Felix, the Cat's.

Why didn't she giggle or pull a towel around her or do something instead of standing there half-naked looking at him. Then she smiled, bowed slightly and, "Pardon my deshabille," she said said.

Mr. Himelstein hurried back to the kitchen. "Let's serve them ourselves, honey," he said. "It will be so much nicer."

Mrs. Himelstein's radio had excellent reception and tone. Whenever the little woman was out, Candice availed herself of this opportunity to improve and increase her musical appreciation. So this Saturday afternoon found her sitting by the radio listening to the opera broadcast. For Candice it was a privilege to be able to hear such glorious music, such lyric voices —so the potatoes on the gas boiled soft and burned to a cinder; the soup boiled away leaving a dark dry residue in the bottom of the pot. Candice was in oblivion. A gust of music had transported her clear away to another world. And a gust of wind bore in Mrs. Himelstein, her Roman nose arched high. She had been smelling things for blocks. "Candice! I won't have it. You hear me! I can't stand it any longer. Get out!" she shrieked in distraction, "get out at once!"

Candice stared at her open-mouthed. It was evident that there was no time for apologies either in French or English, no time to quote from Shakespeare or anybody else. There was only time to 'get.' She went to her room, took off her uniform and began to pack her dilapidated bag. She moved as slowly as the shoot-the-chute going up. Mean-

while she kept talking to herself and not sotto voce either. "Low-minded infidels, crude merchants, prosaic mercenary mortals, soulless dogs." All this abuse merely because Mrs. Himelstein considered her Sabbath dinner more important than the opera. She kept hurrying the girl. When finally Candice stood on the threshold, she turned and glared at her late mistress and spat out like so much venom, "I am gone, O vile descendant of Jacob."

Auntie wasn't surprised to see her niece back; indeed she had not expected her to hold the job more than a week. She planned to intercede for her niece with a crony of hers the next evening. But the next evening it rained hard enough to astonish a Noah. Aunt looked through the window dismally. "I went was to get you a job to-night, but it is too rain-like. So we can't go."

"What!" exclaimed Candice in amazement, her eyes popping. "Stay within this glorious evening? Never!" She ran to the window, lifted the sash and leaned far out letting the rain drip on her woolly head.

"Come in, you fool," shouted her Aunt, "you ain't got no time to catch cold."

Candice drew in her head. Her eyes were glistening more brightly than the raindrops on her face. Paying no heed to her Aunt who was gazing at her wrathfully with arms akimbo, she hurried out to her apartment and over to Mrs. Conelly. She burst in without ceremony, eyes popping, face beaming. "What ecstatic weather we're having," she cried.

Mrs. Conelly didn't know what 'ecstatic' meant, but judging from Candice's animation she gathered it was something fine. Eyeing her guest dubiously she replied, "Sure and I thought it was rainin' hard."

Candice laughed gaily. "Yes it is." Then she turned to Mr. Conelly who was busily shaping a match into a toothpick. "Mr. Conelly, would you lend me your rubber boots and your rain-hood?"

"Sure," he replied, "I'm off duty tonight," and added merrily, "are you playing fireman? Well here's the whole shooting match, coat and all."

She pulled on the big boots and they came up to her thighs. She slipped into the oil-skin and she was lost. She put on the hood and it hung down her back. She surveyed herself in a mirror. "Absolutely waterproof," she announced and compressed her lips in satisfaction.

Down the steps she tramped and out into the dripping night. Down Fifth Avenue along Central Park towards the residential district of the elite, she

went, strolling leisurely, head held high, face upturned to the rain's wet caress. People hurrying by with umbrellas looked at her askance. A policeman eyed her up and down. Who wouldn't? A ludicrous figure she made, weighted down by her fireman's garb.

The avenue was almost deserted. Folks don't go out rainy nights unless they have to; they stay home and talk and play the radio. Usually they keep the windows shut on rainy nights, but there's always an exception. Here was one: an apartment with windows open and radio playing full blast. The program of dance music floated out into the drizzly street. It was real good music—that lowdown stuff from uptown. As Candice came within earshot, she plodded across the street and stood beneath the window to listen. "Aha," she exclaimed in her stage voice, "my Afric blood beats fast and hot within me. This barbaric rhythm calls to me even as its progenitor the tom-tom called to my fore-fathers. Which is to say in the vernacular, it makes my toes itch." She began to tap time through her thick rubber boots. Then she was swaying rhythmically to the mad music. And now she was doing a Charleston rhumba, head thrown back, eyes flashing, fingers snapping—in the rain. "Play on, my merry men." The merry men played on, and a merry crowd gathered around the inspired one, among them the policeman who had previously eyed her so dubiously.

"Say, little one," he drawled, "what's the racket?"

Candice stopped abruptly and looked around. She fluttered her hands Zasu Pitts-like and laughed nervously. "Excellent syncopation — eheh — glorious weather — eheh — my spirits are so effervescent."

"Suppose you come along with me," suggested the officer not unkindly.

She scrutinized him carefully. "Well, I guess I can trust myself with you," she chirped gaily. "In which direction are you going?" she continued. "But it is immaterial, I'm only strolling about for my health." So saying she linked arms with the policeman confidently and comradely as she followed him along to the police station.

Mr. Conelly had gone over to the station to rid himself of his wife's chatter and to see some of the boys. He was still there when Candice and her escort entered. "Why Miss," he exclaimed, "your Aunt's been awfully worried after you. You better come along home with me now."

The policeman looked at Conelly with questioning eyes.

"What's the idea?" he asked in bewilderment.

Candice did in no wise realize the portent of her being in the police station. She turned to the policeman and smiling broadly said, "O it's just my artistic temperament." On her way out with Mr. Conelly she looked back at the officer. "By the way, thank you so much for accompanying me. You proved quite interesting and diverting," she said as she walked out in her clumsy attire, trailing mud and water behind her.

———:o:———

Three Sonnets

FRANK YERBY

I. BEGINNING

Serenely through the endless void of space
Aeons ago, two vast stars rode the sky
Toward an inevitable trysting place,
For stars, like men, must mate before they die.
So now the red verbena knows the sound
Of muted raindrops lashing at the earth;
And for this splotch of color on the ground
Came all the terror of a cosmic birth!
Your hands are soft and cold upon my brow;
Half reverent I'm whispering your name—
Was it in preparation for this hour
There came that holocaust—that burst of flame?
I say it is not so because I must
Knowing tomorrow soft hands will be dust.

II. ENDING

No whisper of the silver slanting rain,
No breath of lilac heavy on the dusk,
No scarlet poppies like the lips of pain—
Nor yet the lichen clinging to a husk
Shall stir my heart and make me cry the spring.
No silent moon with all its magic light,
Nor all the love songs that the breezes sing,
Nor mad impassioned voices of the night
Shall ever lure me back into the past.
But I shall revel in the crashing sound

That thunders through the madly hurling blast.
And bowing like the sapling to the ground
I'll spring aloft and wildly shriek at fate;
For, if God lets me love, why can't I hate?

III. AFTERTHOUGHT

Seeing today the endless barrenness
Of sand and sand and evermore of sand,
And yet no respite for a soul's duress
No rock to cast a shadow in this land,
I walk alone with sand-cracked, weary feet
Plodding and slow as one walks in a dream
With you the one mirage I cannot meet,
Your soft cool voice the only quenching stream.
Hot stinging sands forever giving test
To faith, to hope, to all that men hold good
And I still blindly groping, seeking rest
Beneath a rock—within a shadowed wood—
Knowing at last with sudden sense of shock
You were too frail to be my sheltering rock.

———:o:———

Black Paris

ESLANDA GOODE ROBESON

Paris in June. What a glamourous vision those three words conjure up in the minds of those who have been, and those who have longed to go to Paris.

Extravagantly wide sidewalks with splendid trees marching along the curbs; beautifully laid out boulevards, avenues, and streets with fascinating names; lovely quiet shabby sections reeking with historical associations. Sacre Coeur in the sunlight, in the moonlight. Notre Dame. Bookstalls on the banks of the Seine. Marvellous food. Noisy reckless taxis which miraculously seldom come to grief. Luxurious expensive fashionable hotels; tiny little inexpensive hotels tucked away in convenient corners. Restaurants and cafes to fit every purse. Escorted tours; independent sorties. The

Opera, American Express, Thomas Cook's. Rue de la Paix, Galeries Lafayette, Au Bon Marche. Montmartre and the cabarets; Montparnasse and the sidewalk cafes. No one has been to Paris, in fact nor in fancy, who has not sat for hours at a table in the sun, watching the crowds go by.

In such a setting, who would think of Negroes? Not even Negroes themselves. And yet Negroes form a definite part of Parisian life, and play an important and recognized role in the political, educational, intellectual, literary and theatrical life of Paris, in the ordinary every-day life, and in the night life.

There is Gratien Candace, dark bronze Under-Secretary of State For All The Colonies, and member of the Herriot Cabinet. There is Isaac Beton, his secretary, quiet, aristocratic, dark-brown scholar and gentleman, Charge de Mission Ministere des Colonies, who is also professor of French, Latin, and Greek in five French Universities.

There is Paulette Nardal, handsome bronze-black goddess, who edits a remarkable magazine, "La Revue du Monde Noir"; a beautiful statuesque woman of great dignity and charm, an intellectual, poet and gentlewomen. There is Rene Maran, the coffee coloured writer whose novel "Batouala" was awarded the coveted Goncourt Prix in 1921, and which has been translated into eleven different languages.

There is Clarence Cameron White, ivory coloured Adonis and gifted musician, who has just completed a fascinating opera, "Ouanga", based on Negro Haitien history and romance. There is Prince Kojo Tovalou Houenou, black aristocrat and intellectual, who holds degrees in law and medicine from famous French universities. There is Cecelia Kennedy Yerby, coffee coloured wife of a Negro diplomat, widely travelled, intelligent, tolerant, charming, fascinating woman of the world.

There is Aaron Douglas, black artist with a wholly new technique, who illustrated Paul Morand's "Black Magic" and James Weldon Johnson's "God's Trombones;" who conceived and executed the astonishing murals in the new library at Fisk University, and the equally astonishing murals in the Grill Room of one of Chicago's largest and most fashionable hotels.

There is Kobina Sekyi, attractive, brilliant young lawyer with liminous black skin, who holds degrees in arts, philosophy, sociology and law from English Universities, who was called to the Bar in London, and who represents his people at the Bar in the Gold Coast and in

London.

There is Benglia, nut-brown man with the body of a Greek God, actor and dancer, whose interpretations of "The Emperor Jones" and "Maya" impressed and interested Parisian theatregoers, and whose dances, created and executed by himself, were for many years a feature of the Follies Bergere. There is "Bricktop," otherwise Adah Smith du Conge, light skinned red haired Negro business woman who defied cabaret tradition in Montmartre, whose night club in Pigalle is the rendezvous for world celebrities, and who is favourite entertainer and instructress of royal princes and society queens in the intricate art of the Negro dance step. There is Josephine Baker, cafe-au-lait queen of entertainers, known all over the world, who inaugurates fashions in Paris, and whose name in lights insures the success of any revue in Paris.

Where did these Negroes come from? How did they reach their present position? What is their background? Are they special individuals, isolated and extraordinary, remote from the great bulk of the Negro race? Or are they merely very distinguished individuals who represent a great mass of Negroes all over the world? Are these shining lights any further removed from the bulk of their race, than the shining lights of other better known races are removed from theirs? Are they themselves interested in the millions of other Negroes in the world?

In order to answer these questions I personally interviewed each of the following people, in Paris, in June 1932.

KOJO TOVALOU HOUENOU, PRINCE OF DAHOMEY

"In my country we have no clocks, no watches; we tell the time by sun and shadows; there is plenty of time, so we do not value time nor punctuality; a guest invited for lunch at two o'clock may arrive at six and stay two days or weeks or months, or perhaps never leave at all.

"Nearly three hundred years ago the Behanzin family came, as friends and guests, from Aja Aja in German Togoland to visit us in Dahomey; they stayed on and we gave them Abomey, then a small village in which to settle. Behanzin were warriors, and loved fighting; they soon fought all their neighbors and became extremely powerful.

"My family, the Ayoto,—always one of the first families in Dahomey, was cultured, artistic and peaceful; my ancestors were known for their beautiful work in iron, and it was from this handicraft that we derived one of our titles. (Ayoto means blacksmith).

"The head of Behanzin married my grand-aunt, Han-houende, thus founding my immediate branch of the family. The family lived at Zado and were Counsellors-to-the-Kings; but being Behanzin they continued to fight everybody, and in 1700 became Kings themselves. Every year in the great dry season Behanzin went forth to war, conquering new portions of Nigeria and Gold Coast; if white people had not come, Dahomey might well include all West Coast today.

"In 1750 we made our first treaty with France, another in 1850 with Louis Philippe, and still another in 1854 with Emperor Napoleon III. In 1885 King Toffa (brother of the current Behanzin) who was ruling Portonovo when I was born, accepted the French Protectorate rather than undertake a serious war with France. But Behanzin, as always, wanted war; Toffa and Tovalou, my father (more Ayoto than Behanzin) insisted upon peace; Behanzin, angry, killed sixty of my aunts and uncles and destroyed all our property; then he went to war against France and was defeated in 1890. Dahomey has been a French Protectorate ever since. There are no more kings, but we have chiefs. My father was First Chief and I have succeeded him; my uncle is power now and keeps the place for me.

"My country is still comparatively free, rich and happy; the fine organization for which it was famous still exists even under the French. There is a series of powerful chiefs,—the aristocracy, throughout the country; if the Govenor coughs in the night, the chiefs know it by morning; every little thing, every conversation is reported to the Chief; the Chief always knows every happening and every word of the least importance, so he can be prepared for things. The chiefs are all-powerful and are obeyed, right or wrong, by the people. We are not revolutionaries in Africa.

"Dahomey is small. Zado was the seat of the ancient kings, but when Behanzin came into power they moved the capitol to Abomey; Portonovo is the seat of the French Govenor and Cotonovo is the port; Ouidad, another city on the coast, is important because it marks the place where the Portugese disembarked in the Fifteenth Century and built a fort; it still belongs to the Portugese, who keep a Govenor there.

"The bulk of the country is divided into small villages, under my uncle and the Govenor. There are 300,000 acres which belong to my family. The most important product is palm oil, which is the finest in the world; we export it to Marseilles, Ham-

bourg, Liverpool, etc.; there are about sixty miles of palm trees. Cocoa is also important, and copra. All business is native-owned, and many natives are traders and business men. When the French came to govern us, they issued a decree that all land belonged to white people, but my father went to Paris in 1900 and had that decree annulled. No white people have been able to get legal hold of Dahomey, because the natives are bold and stand up for their rights.

"Voodooism is the religion of Dahomey; our people believe that Voodoo worship originated with them. The Grand Priests of Voodoo worship only secondary gods,—the sun, moon, thunder, all nature powers; there is one great God, Mahu, who is too great, too good, too bright to worship; he protects you. Every two years human sacrifices (enemies captured in war) were offered at great religious feasts; sacrifices were never made to the gods, but to the ancestors, who were believed to live on and to need servants to wait upon them; the heads of the victims were hung in the tombs of the Kings; their bodies were buried. (Human sacrifices were stopped in 1890, with the coming of the French.)

"My people have their own culture, and live simply. Women are kept under, though they have the right to speak at all political meetings, and do speak freely of all they think; it was my great fun to hear my aunts oppose my father at such meetings. The men have many wives and children, one Behanzin (royal) father had from 100 to 200 wives and nearly 900 children. The marriage customs are simple: boys marry between sixteen and twenty, as soon as they feel; the father gives his son the first wife, then all the friends come and give their daughters; girls marry between fourteen and eighteen, as soon as their fathers can establish suitable husbands for them; girls always wait for their fathers to give them to some one to marry.

"There is a very special group of girls called Amazons; these are a group apart, who are brought up as warriors. The King himself usually marries them, and when he does not, they remain virgins and warriors, live at home, and form part of the king's army; there are regular Amazon Regiments, and the king sometimes sets them on to his subjects as one sets a dog on to people who have been naughty.

"They do not write in Dahomey; there is no writing of any kind; all communication is by word of mouth; if all my countrymen were killed, they would leave no trace of their history,

of their existence, except in their art,—in their embroidery, sculpture in stone, wood carving, iron work and buildings.

"There are no books; instead we have the Singers, who commit to memory songs which embody all the history and legends of Dahomey. These Singers are very specially trained, and the precious lore is handed down from generation to generation; children are sent to them as to school, and listen to them steadily, day after day, until they have heard it all; the children of royal blood must, before they are ten, commit to memory all the Singers know; it is their most important work.

"Most people of Dahomey have remarkable memories, but there is a group whose memories are rigorously trained in order that they may serve as Messengers. If one Chief wants to send a message to another he gives his sceptre and the message, by word of mouth, to the Messenger, who memorizes it; after the two or three days' journey the Messenger presents the sceptre to the second Chief, and when he has delivered the message slowly and accurately, he takes back the sceptre.

"Our country belongs to us we have everything we want and nothing much to do; we have only to gather the food and do small work. The climate is pleasant,—not so hot as Senegal because it is tempered by the sea; the great dry season is December through March, and the season of the great rains is April through June.

"I first came to France with my father in 1900 to attend the Universal Exposition in Paris; Father left me at the College in Bordeaux when he went home. I won my first law degree at Bordeaux in 1906, then came to Paris to study medicine, and later practised medicine here.

"I loved the work in the hospitals: at Pitie (Hospital) I used to fight rats, doctors and patients; the filth was unbelievable. At Linac (Hospital for Consumption) there was no light, no air, and a scandal of filth. The old fashioned sanitation and methods continued for so long—until 1913, because the French keep to old things, to old ways, to all tradition. I remember a Sister (nurse) putting some instruments into ordinary water, making the sign of the cross, and murmuring: 'Jesus, Mary and Joseph, make them sterile.' They had no autoclave. Yet fine work was being done. Oscillation was discovered at Linac. French surgeons do all the work in their brain first, then operate with amazing speed and accuracy, and accomplish marvellous cures."

Prince Tovalou served in the

War as lieutenant in the French army, and was wounded at Champagne in 1915; he also served at the Verdun and Argonne fronts. When he was permanently invalided back to Paris, he chafed at inactivity, and was appointed official physician to the Ballet at the Opera. His arrival at the Opera every evening was heralded by military bugles, to his vast amusement. He was also appointed physician to the Firemen of Paris, and the work kept him so busy that three cars were placed at his disposal.

Tovalou is black, with thick woolly hair, of medium build, and would pass unnoticed were it not for his elegance in clothes and manner; elegance which is French, not African. He is intelligent, very well informed, something of a philosopher, and a brilliant conversationalist. He is extremely attractive to women, in the French gallant style. He knows and is known in nearly every inch of Paris, and numbers his friends in aristocratic, intellectual, artistic, musical, theatrical, academic, legal, medical, and ordinary circles there. He was born Kojo Tovalou Houenou, at Portonovo, Dahomey, a prince of royal blood.

———:o:———

Honeymoon

CLAUDE MCKAY

Sweet, be your body a rare figured rug
Upon which I may lay myself full length,
And drink your warm breath as a potent drug,
To make me amorous and increase my strength.
Let me be drunken with your passion's wine,
Our days are foodless, yet I know no pains;
Your subtle presence is an anodyne
That deadens native hungers in my veins.
My heart beats in a wanton mood to move
With the strange rhythm of your spirit's motion.
My soul's a laden boat propelled by love,
And these uplifted days a heaving ocean
Whereon we drift foam-sprinkled, shot with zest,
Desiring not to reach a port of rest.

On The Seventh Day

ALFRED H. MENDES

CAPTAIN DARKASS owned the sloop *Rose Marie*. He was a squat black man, 55 years of age, and his face bore marks of the stormy course his life had taken. For as far back as he could remember he had been sailing the Caribbean. He was born in Carriacou, an island some miles to the north of Grenada, and had there himself built the *Rose Marie*; after which he made Grenville, a village on the windward coast of Grenada, his headquarters. From Grenville every Sunday morning the *Rose Marie*, with Captain Darkass at the helm, sailed through the treacherous passage leading out to sea and headed her bow for Barbados. Every Friday as the sun rose a number of villagers went down to the jetty to greet the sloop's return; and Captain Darkass, busy and boisterous, would make ready for casting anchor.

In those days Mr. Laventille was considered the richest man in Grenville. Every villager respected him and was in the habit of addressing him as "bourgeois." Mr. Laventille was a pure Negro, full of pride, miserly, and yet fond of ostentation. He talked in a loud voice, used as many long words as possible, and was seldom seen walking through the village streets: instead he rode a mule.

One Saturday morning in September Mr. Laventille rode into Grenville with shining spurs and polished saddle. He was smoking a clay pipe because it was cheap and cool to the palate, he said. The sun was already high up and the quaint village houses received its warm rays through wide flung doors and windows. Mr. Laventille's mule ambled along the cobbled street with a lazy motion. Within the reef barrier the *Rose Marie* rode proudly at anchor. A fishing boat had come in with an ample catch of "jacks" that morning, and a group of "marchands" stood around gesticulating and bartering in raucous patois. Mr. Laventille rode down to the jetty, halted his mule, and stood looking out to sea. Presently Captain Darkass strode along and said:

"Bon jour, bourgeois."

"Hah, cap'n," Mr. Laventille said, mopping his brow with a huge bandanna, "I been scannin' de horizon for you. How de *Rose Marie* navigatin'?"

"She sailin' trim like a bird."

"An' de elements?"

"Dis hurricane time, bourgeois, but we ain't get more dan a chicken-blow. You got cargo?"

"Yaas. I got a consyment of wood."

"Well, I ready to tek aboard now, bourgeois. Look, de sailors busy loadin' now. I jes' goin' off to see how dey goin' on."

"You hear de quotation on dis merchandise las' time you in Barbados, cap'n?"

"Top-high, bourgeois, t'ree pound ten per cord, roun' bout."

Mr. Laventille refilled his pipe and lit it. He was wearing an old, baggy tweed suit, and on his head a khaki helmet perched.

"I knows all 'about dat," he said.

"Yesterday I get correspondence; t'ree pound fifteen shillin' per cord. If you in readiness now I can go back and superinten' de carterage. You know what dese cart—gentlemen is wid deir takin' half-load for full."

All that morning handcarts rattled over the cobbled streets down to the jetty with Mr. Laventille's cords of wood. The cartermen's torsos, bathed in perspiration, shone in the sunlight.

The next morning Mr. Laventille watched the *Rose Marie* until she sailed out of sight. His heart glowed within him as he thought of the profit he would make on the consignment. Glancing up at the sky, he saw there wisps of cloud racing before a stiff breeze. The waves broke on the sandy beach with reverberating sounds. He knocked the ash out of his pipe, then carefully got astride his mule and rode through the quiet Sunday streets back to his bungalow just outside the village. Fetching a dilapidated telescope from its hook on the wall, he scanned the horizon through it for many a minute without spotting the *Rose Marie*.

"Good," he murmured, mopping his brow with a huge bandanna.

That night heavy, dark clouds obliterated the stars, and the wind rose. Soon it was blowing a squall, and his bungalow shook as the gusts of wind struck it. Mr. Laventille, listening to the howling conflict of wave and wind, fingered his beads and prayed for the safety of his consignment of wood. The louder the wind shrieked, the louder his voice rose in prayer; he wanted God to hear his supplication.

The next morning some fishermen, labouring into port with a battered boat, told the story of the storm that had raged outside during the night. Mr. Laventille heard and his heart overflowed with joy, for surely, he

said to himself, if their small craft had weathered the gale, the *Rose Marie* . . . .

Friday came. Mr. Laventille, standing on the jetty with telescope to eye, failed to see the *Rose Marie* on any spot of the horizon. A few villagers, for the most part relatives of Captain Darkass and his crew, gathered around Mr. Laventille and excitedly exchanged words of hope and encouragement.

On the seventh day Mr. Laventille, with emotion watery in his eyes, saw the *Rose Marie* slowly making her way through the treacherous channel of the bay So overcome with joy was he, he could not wait to saddle his mule; but, bareheaded in the boiling sun, hurried down to the jetty. The sloop, her torn sails flapping, was a beautiful thing to him.

Mr. Laventille was waiting on the steps of the jetty to welcome Captain Darkass. The captain's face was clouded over with a sombre expression. After shaking hands with Mr. Laventille he was silent for a moment. Then he spoke.

"Bourgeois," he said, "de *Rose Marie* is a fine ship. She weader dat storm all right. Like a bird she sail de rockin' an' roarin' sea. But Barbados . . . . Bourgeois, we arrive at de spot where Barbados was. Roun' an' roun' we sail. For two days an' two nights we sail roun' an' roun' de spot where Barbados was. Barbados ain' dere no more, bourgeois. Barbados sink . . . ."

———:o:———

Sleep

MORTON ELIOT FREEDGOOD

I lay for awhile watching the shadow of the tree outside shiver on the white windowshade wishing there was a darker shade. Later I turned over and lay with my back to the windows: the inside of the room was black and grey. I jacknifed my knees and tucked my chin and mouth into the quilt for warmth. On the other bed Bert was sleeping silently. Once he turned around and gave a little snort; then he was sleeping silently again. I turned around and the branches were frozen on the windowshade. I closed my eyes and a long whistle shouted: my

heart began to pound. I heard the train stretch by humming over the tracks. I turned into the room, jacknifing my knees tucking in over my mouth looking into the room getting greyer. After awhile I got out of bed and searched in my clothes like a murdered man on the floor for my watch. It was six o'clock. I put the watch down on a dresser, and I got back into bed shivering under the covers.

Later I felt that it was hopeless. I got up and wrapped the blankets around me. I shuffled to the dresser and strapped my watch on. I went out of the room trying to walk quietly trying to shut the door quietly. In the hall the cold floor was numbing. I walked slowly past the room where the girls were sleeping. I listened for sleep-quiet, thinking vividly of Helen and Cecelia warmly asleep in a warm bed. The door of Helen's brothers' room was half open, and I could see them sleeping bulkily. The bathroom door was open, and a grey glaze bounced off the purple tiling down the steps. I went downstairs trailing my blankets over the steps.

I went thru the living-room and the dining-room. I pushed against the kitchen door and there was light coming from above the stove, and someone was sitting wrapped in blankets leaning towards the stove.

"Who's that?"

"Helen?" I said. All of the jets on the stove were lit and the blue yellow orange pink flames were leaping at the ceiling. She was looking at me with her face dark and flickering, with her eyes looking black out of white. "What are you doing?"

"Is it Carl? Hello. I couldn't sleep. I thought I might as well come down here and keep warm."

"I couldn't sleep either. I'm tired as hell, too, but I just can't seem to go off."

"Pull a chair up," Helen said. I went back into the shadows and brought a chair to the stove. "Does this happen to you often, not sleeping?"

"Once in a while," I said. "If there's something on my mind bothering me. . ."

"Or if you sleep in a strange bed?" she said.

"No, not at all. That doesn't bother me, the bed is fine and comfortable. I just couldn't sleep. It was very nice of you to let me sleep over."

"We couldn't let you go home. You'd be travelling still."

She turned to watch the flames, with her profile flickering upwards. Her coverings were tented high around her shoulders, but slightly open at the front. I could see her peach nightgown rising and falling uneasily against her dark skin. I

told her that somehow I expected that she would be wearing black pajamas.

"What made you think of that?" She turned to look at me, with the flames snapping at the side of her face.

"What? Oh, I don't know what—"

"No," she said. "I don't mean that. "I mean what made you think of that color?"

"Oh, I don't know." I saw her face darkening and I felt my own getting warm. I pushed my chair back and got up. "I'm going to see if there's anything." The sink was full of bottles that clinked when my hand stirred them. My hand found a bottle on the cupboard. It gave a soft surge of sound when I shook it. I carried it back to the stove and sat down.

"I don't understand how they overlooked that," Helen said.

"Will you have some?" I asked her.

"I've had enough, I think."

"No?" I let a small mouthful go down my throat slowly. "Not bad," I said.

"I guess I'll have some." I passed her the bottle, and it went up and her throat went up drinking.

"It's kind of late—early, to be drinking, isn't it?" I said. Grey was coming thru the window fast now, fuzzing the kitchen and everything in it. A whistle screamed and I jumped a little in my chair. The train was rumbling along the tracks. "Goddam that whistle," I said.

She laughed a little pulling her blanket around her shoulders. "The Long Island? You get used to it."

"It sounds right out in the backyard."

"It's not. It's a few blocks away. It whistles like that because there's a crossing and no gate."

"No wonder you don't sleep. I was almost going off, and then that whistle and it was all over."

"The whistle never bothers me. I'm used to it. I don't know, I just couldn't get to sleep."

"Maybe you were thinking too much," I said. "That's my trouble, when I get thinking I turn and toss and turn, and it's hours before I can fall asleep."

"I kept thinking songs over and over again."

I nodded: I know. I took another drink: a small one. "Helen?" I held the bottle towards her.

"No." The grey was dusting her hair, showing it hazy and puffed up in disorder. "What time?"

"Quarter of seven." I put the bottle down on the stove. "It warms you nicely."

The liquor was a little warm thrill at my belly. I spread my palms over the high jumping

flames. I took my hands off the flames and sat back in my chair watching her profile looking into the flames. Past her head the backyard was beginning to come in pale thru the window. I kept watching her, and when she knew I was watching her she tightened her jawline by lifting her head and her gaze near the top of the flames. Later she turned her head towards me, and her eyes were moist with a look that I liked. I shifted to the edge of my chair, and with her head still turning towards me I put my arms around her in the blanket and kissed her. For a moment I felt her mouth willing and familiar, and then her lips tightened and became hard over her teeth and her mouth went away.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

Her face was looking at me, and I had my arms around her around the blanket, but her face and her body had a going away feeling. I pulled her body resisting toward me, and then her resistance broke and she was close with her mouth. She was kissing me, and then her face and body were withdrawn, but there was no going away feeling in the withdrawal.

She said softly, "I thought it was much too early."

"It's never too late," I said. I said it, and then I repeated it, trying to look what I meant.

Her eyelashes closed down on her eyes and she looked away. Then she looked back and said, with her eyes still curtained, "Give me a little drink, please, dear."

I gave her the bottle and she took a very small drink. She gave it back to me and I took a fairly large drink. She came against me, with her face in my blanket gainst my chest. When I wanted to kiss her, lifting her head, her eyes were closed and her mouth was slack. I thought she must be falling asleep. Then I felt her lashes flicker against me. We were quiet for awhile, and her breathing became regular and deep. But at intervals her lashes flickered against me, and I knew she wasn't asleep. I said her name twice and she didn't answer. Her lashes flickered against me. I sat up straight and her head went up off my chest. She straightened up.

"Have I been sleeping?" she asked.

"You know," I said, "I don't think there's any experience worse than not being able to sleep."

"Yes," she nodded. Her eyes were tired looking and ringed: they wandered far over my head away from my gaze.

"It's hell not being able to sleep," I said.

"I've been thinking it's probably because I've heard too much

dance music tonight. That's why I was thinking songs all night."

"Sure," I said, "it was the songs that wouldn't let you relax."

She sat up straight and began to fix her hair with one hand. The grey mist in the room was beginning to thin out. I heard the kitchen door pushing open and I saw the flames shape like a bayonet and make a quick stab at the ceiling. Helen said, "Hello, Rob."

He came into the room. "What are you two doing here?" he said. His hair was streaked down over his forehead, and his eyes were small and his face was big with sleep. He was wearing a maroon flannel robe.

"Neither of us could sleep," I said. I stood up, hitching my blankets up around me.

"I didn't sleep so well myself." He ran his fingers thru his hair. "I woke up, and I thought I'd come down and get the fire ready so when the rest of them wake up the place'll be warm." He looked at Helen looking into the flames. "Why don't you try to get some sleep now, Helen?"

"Yes."

She stood up and turned the jets down. The room surrendered to the greyness, but there was a remembrance of blue and yellow and orange and pink over the stove.

Rob held the door open and we went out. "See you later. Sleep as late as you want to," he said to me. "I'll keep the rest of them quiet." He waved to us, and turned off to the door that led down to the cellar.

I followed Helen up the stairs. The bathroom was purple. We stopped before the door of her room. She said, "Well, goodnight."

I said, "Goodnight," looking at her hard, and then I laughed at the goodnight and she laughed too.

She pressed my hand and went into the room. I went down the corridor towards my bed, yawning, with my face feeling tired and spent.

Portrait of Richard Aldington

DEREK PATMORE

There are four lines in one of Richard Aldington's longer poems, "The Eaten Heart," which I always feel are intensely characteristic of the man. They are:

"I like the men and women of my age,
I like their hardness
For though we are a battered and rather bitter set,
Still we have faced the facts, we have been pretty honest."

There is the cry of the disappointed idealist in these lines. The young poet, who before the War thought all was going to be well with the world, has seen the Europe he loved descend into the chaos of post-war conditions. He has grown older and outwardly bitter, but at heart he still feels that something can be done to save modern civilization.

Richard Aldington's novels disturb many people because as he says: "We have faced the facts, we have been pretty honest." This quality of candour and frankness is very apparent in his own character. He is one of the few Englishmen of his generation who have had the courage to stand up and criticize the ostrich-like complacency of post-war England.

When one first meets Richard Aldington, one is agreeably surprised. This tall, fair-haired and young-looking man looks more like an Army officer than a poet and satirical novelist. He is disarmingly shy and strangers worry him. He likes to be in the company of people he has known, liked and trusted for some time. He sets a high standard for his friends, but once you are admitted to his friendship, you have gained something rare and enduring.

Richard is fanatically loyal to his friends. He will hear no ill-word against them, and paradoxically enough for so critical a man, he will often endow them with qualities and virtues they do not even claim to possess. In his youth, this faith and enthusiastic championship of the ideas of men and women who were his intimates and friends caused him several bitter disappointments because they did not live up to the high standards that he felt a true artist should maintain. Today he still believes in his fellow creatures and I think that this belief in life—so rare amongst contemporary writers—is one of his greatest qualities as a man and writer.

Richard is a patriot who loves his country so deeply that he continually broods over its failings. This is such an English character-

istic that I would like to point out here that Richard Aldington is an Englishman. He was born and brought up in Kent. So many people I know have thought he was an American writer! Undoubtedly his early associations with the Imagist group of poets engendered this idea.

Richard Aldington began writing when he was seventeen. He came up to London to start his career as a poet, and he once told me that one of the first jobs he did was writing football reports for one of the London evening papers which also published his poems and verse translations from the Greek. I have seen a picture of Richard at this period. He wore a beard then which made him appear very much the young romantic poet. He was terribly poor but he was young. The world was full of beautiful cities and countries to be visited. He was full of hope and confidence. The new Renaissance was at hand.

They were exciting times in which to live, these years in London that preceded the War. Ford Maddox Ford was editing the *English Review*. Richard Aldington, Ezra Pound and D. H. Lawrence were founding the Imagist Movement in poetry. Wyndham Lewis was editing *Blast*, and Gaudier-Brzeska was a struggling young sculptor.

About this time Richard sold some poems in America and on this he travelled through France and Italy. These travels made him fall in love with the South, and to this day, Richard is happiest when he is living beside the Mediterranean. It is an interesting fact that he has written practically all his novels whilst living in villas along the French Riviera.

The War came and engulfed young Richard Aldington the poet. Four years later, he returned to civilian life to find everything changed. He had to begin life all over again.

The ten years following the Armistice found Richard Aldington living quietly in the English countryside. He turned his attention to French 18th Century literature and translated and edited many of the more important works. This side of Aldington's work is inclined to be forgotten now that he has become so important a novelist.

In 1929, the publication of "Death of a Hero" revealed Richard Aldington's power as a prose writer. Together with the ensuing novels, it voiced his discontent with post-war England.

I feel that within the next few years Aldington will give us another book written on so large a canvas as "Death of a Hero," in which he will sum up his whole interpretation and solution of the problem of the complicated post-war world.

Richard Aldington is a poet and

philosopher as well as a novelist. He believes that one of the causes of modern unhappiness is that most people have lost the art of living. In the preface to "All Men Are Enemies," he writes: "We have been taught so long that life must have some exterior end and justification that we have forgotten that living is itself enough, that to be alive and conscious is itself an excellent and miraculous experience."

I have always found that writers have few hobbies outside their work, and Richard Aldington is no exception. However, he loves motoring. I shall never forget how when I was staying with him in Florence and he was beginning "All Men Are Enemies," he burst into the living room one day and said: "I can't get these opening chapters right. Let's go to Capri!" So the next day saw the party bundled into his touring Ford and off we drove.

Another time we drove with my mother all thru France from Toulon to Calais. He is an ideal travelling companion. He has an uncanny flair for good food and comfortable small hotels. Richard adores good food and there is a restaurant at Bordeaux where the food is so ambrosial that Richard is always finding excuses for a visit down there.

He loves swimming too, but only in his beloved Mediterranean. He works tremendously hard. When he is working on a book, he writes regularly every morning and then again in the afternoon. He says writers don't need much exercise, but if he is staying in the South, he usually bathes in the late afternoon, and in his earlier days he frequently indulged in walking tours.

He hates possessions. Consequently, he has never settled down and bought a house. He likes to move about continually. One winter will find him in Spain, another in Italy, and perhaps in the following spring he will be motoring thru Portugal or just returning from a trip to the West Indies, and this past summer he rented a house in Connecticut. During the last two years he has spent some part of the year in London, but he leads a very retired life when he is there. He refuses to be lionized. He never goes to the theatre.

There is an old-fashioned theatrical 'public house' near Liecester Square where the seats are covered in red-plush and the walls are decorated with paintings of past favourites, and here you will often find Richard quietly dining with one or two friends.

He reads a great deal. I remember being surprised to discover that he was a great admirer of Dickens. When he is travelling, he usually carries several copies of his favourite Greek and Latin classics in his trunk. You

will find that there are frequent allusions to the classics in all of Aldington's books.

Although he leads a retired life, Richard Aldington takes an active interest in politics. He is extraordinarily well-informed and a brilliant conversationalist on all affairs. Sometimes he will deliberately forego seeing any newspapers, saying that modern journalism just fills him with despair. Then in a morbid moment he will relent and read *The Times* and be plunged in cosmic gloom for hours afterwards.

At heart, he is still foremost a poet, despite his fame and success as a novelist. He once remarked to me: "I'm told that the pundits deplore the fact that all young poets want to write novels. Good Heavens, can you blame them? In a novel you can move freely, you can say something, you can let your energies flow spontaneously. But the modern intellectual convention is self-sterilizing and self-thwarting. It makes writers try to be original. The intellectualist poets are all trying to add a cubit, by taking thought, to their native half-inch stature."

LIST OF BOOKS BY RICHARD ALDINGTON

Published by Doubleday Doran

FICTION: Death of A Hero, The Colonel's Daughter, All Men Are Enemies, Women Must Work, Soft Answers, Roads to Glory.

POETRY: Collected Poems, A Dream in the Luxembourg Life Quest.

BELLES LETTRES: Voltaire, a Critical Biography; Literary Studies and Reviews, French Studies and Reviews, D. H. Lawrence.

TRANSLATIONS: The Alcestis of Euripides, Medallions, The Decameron of Boccacio, Fifty Romance Poems, The Fifteen Joys of Marriage (15th Century), Imaginary Voyages of Cyrano de Bergerac, Plays by Regnard, Nesage, Marivaux, Destouches; Dangerous Acquaintances of Choderlus de Naclos, The Letters of Frederick the Great and Voltaire, Candide and other Stories by Voltaire.

Scheme

GARY GEORGE

—Ecurb Y. Drahcir is the name he told me. And the myths, of which the following is one, he spouts at the slightest provocation. A strangely strange looking lad he was and I met him at the Cafe Royal. But Ecurb Y. Drahcir he said was his name. A literary device I'm sure, for he told me that I might repeat any of his tiny tales if I did so after his manner. I have tried.—Gary George.

Truly there had never been a man who wanted to die so little as he. There was still so much of Life he had not known; so much of Life he had known. And he loved Life with a tenacity that prevented for a great while the usual procedure of Things as they should be. For Life and Death dove-tailed with mathematical precision and intricate detail, and he quite upset their pretty design with his consistent refusal to collaborate as did all other things which live and die. For he stubbornly held on to Life.

He loved Life. Loved Life with the passionate and also passive affection bred from habit. He knew Life too well and Death was new. He had played and wept and laughed and loved and hated. He had lived with Life. He had lived and was living, and Life he knew, so he clung tenaciously to all that was familiar. He held stubbornly to Life. And the scheme of things was upset by this selfish procedure.

Of course Life was flattered that such love should be so evident, but he was a worn-out man, and Life was through with him and had quite discarded him. But he would not be discarded, and Life was annoyed. And Death was piqued that abhorrence of Her should be made so manifest. After all there were many who welcomed Death, and everyone accepted Her. Everyone save this one, who clung so fervently, with so little pride, to Life. It was most insulting to Death and quite upset the pattern of things as they are.

So Life and Death plotted to outwit this puny thing, whose selfish whim and foolish affection disrupted so completely Their well laid plans. And once, when for a moment the man slept, Death took him. Life sighed a small sigh of momentary regret, turned for diversion to the litter side of a black alley cat, tweeked the tails of the fourteen kittens, and felt quite proud of such fine work.

And Death put him aside till the moment when, after the worms and the elements had

worked their tasks, Time could find a spare moment to give Her the finished product, wrought from dust returning to dust et al. And Death, marking in blue that this man was to be won over to love of Her, when she could find time, sighed in pleasant anticipation and swooped prankishly to take from the arms of a queen her first-born son.

So the worms worked their will and rejoiced in Life. A fisherman dug them up and speared them through and used them for bait. Death accepted them casually. When Time got around to it, He followed his usual procedure and dust was dust et al.

And the man was dead. How long he was dead he never knew, but Death was sweet. A little strange at first, exotic, but after a while, when he had learned Her ways, he loved Her, became accustomed to Her, and all was well. For long lengths and a great while things were as they were. Then he was seized with a great queerness and knew that the dreaded moment was coming when he must leave Death, leave all with which he was familiar. He was afraid. It meant leaving all he knew and loved and was accustomed to. So he clung tenaciously to Death. And Death was flattered, but Death had tired of him, had become bored with his affection. Besides, he was upsetting the preconceived plan of things as they should be and that was annoying, for the Plan was orderly and largely the creation of Habit. And so she relinquished him, disposed of him.

And he liked not at all the manner in which he was disposed. For he was bewildered by the darkness and the organic smells and his close quarters, and twisted and turned and gave his mother great trouble at his Birth.

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Naughty Antillean Queen

LOUIS EMANUEL MARTIN

Unquestionably, whoever first called Cuba "The Queen of the Antilles" had either little regard for royalty or a gross inaptitiude for metaphors. Indeed, I can recall no queen who has consistently behaved so much like a wench.

From that late October day in 1492 when Cristobal Colon first set foot on her fertile soil up until this late year of grace, Cuba has seen only a few periods of prosperity and hardly any of peace. With a flimsy economic

system, a flock of rotten politicians, and a hopelessly confused public opinion, present day Cuba certainly cannot be accused of running counter to her tradition.

The prosperity which Cuba enjoyed in the past resulted largely, if not wholly, from the exportation of a few products with which the land abounds, sugar and tobacco and, to a lesser extent, coffee and fruit. The intensive and widespread farming of these two or three products meant a consequent neglect of others equally as necessary. This complete dependence on the returns from her exports naturally led to disaster when Cuba could not find a foreign market.

Coupled with this economic system, everywhere heralded as unsound, is the oppressive slave condition imposed by big business. American, English, and other foreign capitalists have rivaled the mosquitoes in bloodsucking. Natives are forced to work on vast plantations for less than twenty-five cents a day at work that is only seasonal. While their owners reap startling profits, these plantation workers redouble their indebtedness. This unexampled exploitation has known no limits in the past and remains, even today, apparently amenable to no correction.

If the economic set-up of Cuba may be said to "cap the climax," the integrity of Cuban politicians certainly "takes the cake." In La Habana they are called "sinverguenzas", men without shame, the term is mild indeed. Since Grau San Martin, an exception among Cuban politicians, left the presidency several months ago, any number of "secretaries" have become wealthy. Batista, the brown boss of all Cuba, has spent huge sums of state money in order to maintain an army which everybody recognizes as a purely political instrument. Appropriations for the National University and many other public institutions have been withheld when not altogether cancelled. While thousands of Cubans are facing virtual starvation, the national treasury is being emptied by methods which suggest the ways of God in their mysteriousness.

The first four political bosses or sinverguenzas in Cuba today are Fulgencio Batista, the military chief, President Carlos Mendieta, Ambassador Jefferson Caffrey, and publisher Jose Rivero. White-haired Mendieta was appointed by Batista and Caffrey to the presidency of the republic at the resignation of Grau San Martin. Mr. Jefferson Caffrey is the representative of American capital in Cuba who succeeded Sumner Welles. Jose Rivero is the publisher of Cuba's biggest newspaper, "Diario De La Marina,"

and he has the delicate task of moulding public opinion in support of the present administration. During a strike or uprising, his paper is the only one permitted on the streets of La Habana.

Following the general strike in Cuba last March, Mendieta wrote a letter for publication that appeared in the "New York Times" in which he said that the reason his government resorted to force was to protect the Cuban people against a powerful, well organized minority who were thirsty for power. It must have been overlooked that Mendieta himself was merely appointed and no elections have been held to determine which party represents the majority. He was put in office by a powerful, well organized minority thirsty for power.

Of the four tyrants, Batista is by far the most interesting as well as the most powerful. He is a short, brown skin mulatto with a commanding personality. He has formed a great friendship with Jefferson Caffrey, a former Alabama cracker, and their early morning horseback rides furnish the Cubans with material for endless wisecracking. Like Mussolini and Hitler, he is a great orator, and the coup d'etat which he manipulated to get in power, trapping the army chiefs in the Hotel Nacional during a conference, has earned him the title of Little Napoleon. Batista, however, is not popular among the masses and he knows it. Repeatedly he declares publicly his intention of leaving politics alone and guarantees the people honorable elections which are being continually postponed.

The slightest turn of events in Cuba will automatically mean death for these four men. Plots against their lives are being unearthed daily and they appear in public only when acompanied by little "armies." The present wave of kidnapping and bank robbing in Cuba is very definitely the work of the opposition who want money to buy ammunition for the next fight.

Thus, threatened with poverty and harassed by these ruthless, self-seeking politicians, the average citizen of Cuba lives as if in a nightmare. Uncertainty about the future, as well as the insecurity of the present, crushes his hopes and emasculates his spirit. Some Cubans are putting their trust in the brown soldiers of Batista, and some are looking abroad for foreign help and quite a few are making ready to give their lives in Cuba's next "baptism of fire." That this situation cannot last is certain.

Unpleasant as my sketch of Cuba may appear, the American tourist in Cuba can still discover a remarkable gaiety. It is one of the paradoxes of the Latin spirit

to be at once deadly earnest and apparently carefree. In the late afternoons along the Prado and Parque Central, throngs of beautiful brown girls and boys still pass and repass each other, playing their clever game of hunting hearts. Night life in La Habana, even now, surpasses that of New York and with less restraint perhaps than in the proverbially "gay Paree".

I remember a night several months ago when I stood in the central park of La Habana listening to a band playing rhumba and tango tunes while a colorful, pleasure bound crowd milled by. Captivated as I was by the ineffable splendor of the place and the noisy gaiety of the crowd, I felt certain that Utopia at last was found. Suddenly, in the distance I heard a rifle crack and thirty seconds had not passed when guns were blasting everywhere. Men, women and children threw themselves, sprawling, face forward to the ground. After another thirty seconds the firing ceased. Immediately the interrupted music and the passing crowd began again. To the young Cubans it was but a shower. That it was a shower of bullets instead of rain really didn't seem to matter.

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Black Reconstruction

JEROME B. PETERSON

"Black Reconstruction" by Dr. W. E. Burghardt DuBois (Harcourt, Brace, $4.50) is a history of the part which Black Folk played in the attempt to reconstruct Democracy in America after the War of the Rebellion, now softened to terms more polite as the Civil War or the War between the States. It covers the period of twenty momentous years from 1860 to 1880. This is a sadly needed contribution to American history because of the vast amount of malicious perversion of facts as to the part that black men played in it.

It is true that Col. George W. Williams in his monumental "History of the Negro Race in America" devoted several chapters to Reconstruction. giving credit to the Negro for much good that was accomplished. Frederick Douglass in his autobiography also gave testimony as to the triumphs and failures of the Reconstruction era. But these books were published in 1883 and 1893 respectively, and are

probably but little known to the present generation. There has arisen a succession of apologists and champions of the one time rebels who have painted what they term "the Lost Cause" in glamorous tints, reserving the blackest colors and harshest censure for the Negro and his white allies, usually stigmatized by the terms "scalawag" or "carpetbagger."

It was therefore time that a writer with Dr. DuBois' genius for research and his brilliancy of style and vivid descriptive powers should restore this period in terms of verity and scientific accuracy. Some of the reviewers of his book, while acknowledging its strength and vigor, have accused him of being bitter and a propagandist. If there is any ground for the former reproach, it might well be justified by the rank series of political blunders and injustices that he has to chronicle in the dealings of the Federal government with its Negro citizens. It was such avoidance of a straightforward policy of evenhanded justice that made white men like Charles Sumner and Thaddeus Stevens bitter in their day.

As far as propaganda is concerned, Dr. DuBois in his last chapter shows how the facts of American history have been falsified because the nation was ashamed. He says that the South was ashamed because it fought to perpetuate human slavery, which is perhaps stretching a point, because as Henry Mencken and other acute observers have insisted, slavery still exists in certain sections of the South. On the other hand, according to Dr. DuBois, the North was ashamed because it had to call in the black man to save the Union, abolish slavery and establish democracy. To confirm the charge of propaganda against the Negro as a race a study of current textbooks made by Helen Boardman is submitted showing how the faults and failures of Reconstruction have been ascribed to Negro ignorance and corruption.

The scope and magnitude of Dr. DuBois' work, which makes a volume of over seven hundred pages, are best shown by his definition of Reconstruction, as he regards it. He says:

"Reconstruction was an economic revolution on a mighty scale and with world-wide reverberation. Reconstruction was not simply a fight between the white and black races in the South or between master and ex-slave. It was much more subtle; it involved more than this . . . . . .It was a vast labor movement of ignorant, earnest, and bewildered black men whose faces had been ground in the mud by their three awful centuries of degra-

dation and who now staggered forward blindly in blood and tears amid petty division, hate and hurt, and surrounded by every disaster of war and industrial upheaval. Reconstruction was a vast labor movement of ignorant, muddled and bewildered white men who had been disinherited of land and labor and fought a long battle with sheer subsistence, hanging on the edge of poverty, eating clay and chasing slaves, and now lurching up to manhood. Reconstruction was the turn of white Northern migration southward to new and sudden economic opportunity which followed the disaster and dislocation of war, and an attempt to organize capital and labor on a new pattern and build a new economy. Finally Reconstruction was a desperate effort of a dislodged, maimed, impoverished and ruined oligarchy and monopoly to restore an anachronism in economic organization by force, fraud and slander, in defiance of law and order and in the face of a great labor movement of white and black, and in bitter strife with a new capitalism and a new political framework."

These are the contending forces that Dr. DuBois deals with in great detail and with illuminating accuracy, reinforcing his statements by numerous references to accredited authorities at the end of each chapter. In his brief introduction of a single page Dr. DuBois warns his readers that the attitude of any person toward this story will be distinctly influenced by his theories of the Negro race. "If he believes that the Negro in America and in general is an average and ordinary human being, who under given environment develops like other human beings, then he will read this story and judge it by the facts adduced. If, however, he regards the Negro as a distinctly inferior creation, who can never successfully take part in modern civilization and whose emancipation and enfranchisement were gestures against nature, then he will need something more than the sort of facts that I have set down. But this latter person, I am not trying to convince." All of which is very frank and to the point.

A notable feature of this work is the author's insistence upon treating the problem of reconstruction from an economic viewpoint. He devotes his early chapters to a description of the various elements in the drama of reconstruction such as the Black Worker, the White Worker and the Planter. In a chapter entitled "The General Strike", the movement of the slave population towards the Union armies, which finally resulted in their being adjudged as contraband of

war, is described as culminating in the steps that made the Negro a soldier, a citizen and a voter. The looming of Emancipation is lyrically told in "The Coming of the Lord", the chapter closing with a German quotation in verse from Johann Schiller.

The slow processes of Reconstruction legislation through Congress are followed with strict attention to detail and numerous citations from the burning speeches of Sumner and Stevens. The inception of the Freedman's Bureau is described "as the most extraordinary and far-reaching institution of social uplift that America ever has attempted. It had to do, not simply with the emancipated slaves and poor whites, but also with the property of the Southern planters. The most fortunate thing that President Lincoln gave the Bureau, according to Dr. DuBois, was its head, General Oliver O. Howard, who is termed a good man, sympathetic and humane. The total cost of food and clothing issued by the Bureau, 1865-1871, was set down at $3,168,325.

In the chapter "Transubstantiation of a Poor White" Dr. DuBois tells how Andrew Johnson unexpectedly raised to the Presidency by the assassination of Lincoln, was suddenly set between a democracy which included poor whites and black men, and an autocracy that included Big Business and slave barons. He surrendered his original convictions to become the associate of the autocrats whom he had opposed. Dr. DuBois calls it "the tragedy of American prejudice made flesh."

There are chapters on the Black Proletariat in South Carolina, Mississippi and Louisiana; the White Proletariat in Alabama, Georgia and Florida, together with a review of much of the legislation passed by the various state legislatures during Reconstruction. It was these legislators during Reconstruction who gave South Carolina so excellent a constitution, who founded good social legislation, and a new system of public schools. And yet the charges of corruption were made against all the members generally with but little proof to justify it.

In his bibliography at the end of the book Dr. DuBois classifies certain historians as "anti-Negro", beginning with John Burgess. Under the head of Propaganda he lists a dozen writers who select and use facts and opinions in order to prove that the South was right, the North vengeful or deceived, and the Negro stupid. He includes Claude Bowers, author of "Tragic Era". Another group are rated as "Fair to indifferent on the Negro"; while a smaller

group of thirteen are rated as "Historians who have studied the history of Negroes and write sympathetically about them".

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Dear Reader

There was considerable praise for the last number of **Challenge,** much mention of Hughes Allison's story and nice words about young Frank Yerby. Almost every contributor came up for flattering comment. For all of which we thank you, though none of the letters received were lively enough to print. Letters are perhaps our pet diversion. We rarely answer them, but when the postman doesn't ring twice we are keenly disappointed.

Somebody asked us why **Challenge** was for the most part so pale pink. We said because the few red articles we did receive were not literature. We care a lot about style. And we think a message is doubly effective when effectively written without bombast or bad spelling. James Stephens' story "Hunger" is to us the peak of propaganda. For it is a **masterpiece** of restrained writing.

We would like to print more articles and stories of protest. We have daily contact with the underprivileged. We know their suffering and soul weariness. They have only the meagre bread and meat of the dole, and that will not feed their failing spirits. Yet the bourgeois youth on the southern campus, who should be conscious of these things, is joining a fraternity instead of the brotherhood of serious minds. Leadership of the literate is infinitely preferable to the blind leadership of the blind. D. W.

Voices

JUANITA C. DeSHIELD sent us her story some time ago. At first we didn't dream that we'd ever print it. But here it is, a diamond in the rough, very rough but a diamond.

MORTON ELIOT FREEDGOOD contributes another story.

ALFRED MENDES has a novel out in England this month. He says it has no plot either, but it does have a dozen exciting Negro characters.

GARY GEORGE is a name unknown to us, and we are wondering if it is not a pseudonym.

FRANK G. YERBY sent us these three sonnets in long hand. We carefully copied them in our own long hand and sent them to our printer.

CLAUDE McKAY is living quietly in New York City and working on a nearly completed novel.

ESLANDA GOODE ROBESON sent us this excellent sheaf from London.

DEREK PATMORE is a descendant of Coventry Patmore, the Victorian poet. His latest work, "Portrait of My Family," was published by Harper and Brothers in October. He likes New York and plans to return next Spring.

LOUIS EMANUEL MARTIN. who has a Cuban father and an American mother, is 22, a graduate of the University of Michigan, has spent a year in Cuba at the Universidad de la Habana, and has traveled extensively in Mexico and Canada.

JEROME B. PETERSON was one of the early owners of the New York AGE, and for many years was its editorial writer. He was consul to Venezuela and deputy collector of internal revenue in Puerto Rico. He is now retired and lives in Brooklyn, New York.